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“ UNDER WESTERN EYES ”*

BY JOSEPH CONRAD

CHAPTER III

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.—*Razumov, a student of philosophy at the University of St. Petersburg, is supposed to be the son of humble parents, but is under the protection of a powerful nobleman. At the moment when he has decided to compete for a scholarship medal a despotic Minister of State is assassinated. Razumov returning to his rooms finds Haldin, a fellow student, awaiting him. Haldin reveals the fact that he threw the bomb which killed the minister. Believing Razumov sympathetic, he asks him to assist him in his escape. Razumov, inwardly protesting against being involved in the affair, starts out to do as Haldin wishes. The plan, however, miscarries, and Razumov in desperation decides to lay the whole matter before Prince K——, his mysterious protector. The Prince approves Razumov's conduct and takes him at once to the house of General T——, by whom he is closely questioned. The General learning the time and place at which Haldin expects to meet the man who is to convey him from the city, sends Razumov back to his rooms. He finds Haldin still there and tells him that all is arranged. In a thoughtless outburst he permits Haldin to discover that he is not in sympathy with his deed and Haldin departs, leaving Razumov uncertain whether the police are on hand to make the arrest. Exhausted by his emotion, he sets down briefly his own political creed, and, pinning the paper to the wall, falls into a troubled sleep.*

APPROACHING this part of Mr. Razumov's story, my mind, the decent mind of an old teacher of languages, feels more and more the difficulty of the task.

The task is not, in truth, the writing in the narrative form a *précis* of a strange human document, but the rendering—I perceived it now clearly—of the moral conditions ruling over a large portion of this earth's surface; conditions not easily to be understood, much less discovered in the limits of a story till some key word is found; a word that could stand at the back of all the words covering the pages that remain to write; a word which if not truth itself may perchance hold truth enough to help the moral discovery which should be the object of every tale.

I turn over for the hundredth time the leaves of Mr. Razumov's record, I lay it aside, I take up the pen—and the pen being ready for its office of setting down black on white, I hesitate. For the word that persists in creeping under its point is no other word than Cynicism.

For that is the mark of Russian autocracy and of Russian revolt. In its pride of numbers, in its strange pretensions of sanctity, and in the secret readiness to abase itself in suffering the spirit of Russia is the spirit

of cynicism. It informs the declarations of her statesmen, the theories of her revolutionists and the mystic vaticinations of prophets to the point of making freedom look like a form of debauch, and the Christian virtues themselves appear positively indecent. . . . But I must apologize for the digression. It proceeds from the consideration of the course taken by the story of Mr. Razumov after his conservative convictions diluted in a vague liberalism natural to the ardor of his age had become crystallized by the shock of his contact with Haldin.

Razumov woke up for the tenth time, perhaps, with a heavy shiver. Seeing the light of day in his window, he resisted the inclination to lay himself down again. He did not remember anything, but he did not think it strange to find himself on the sofa in his cloak and chilled to the bone. But the light coming through the window seemed strangely cheerless, containing no promise as the light of each new day should for a young man. It was the awakening of a man mortally ill or of a man ninety years old. He looked at the lamp which had burnt itself out. It stood there, the extinguished beacon of his labors, a cold object of brass and porcelain, amongst the scattered pages of his notes and small piles of books—a mere litter of blackened paper—dead matter—without significance or interest.

He got on his feet, and divesting himself of his cloak, hung it on the peg, going through all the motions mechanically. An incredible dulness, a ditch-water stagnation, was sensible to his perceptions as though life had withdrawn itself from all things and even from his own thoughts. There was not a sound in the house.

Turning away from the peg, he thought in that same lifeless manner that it must be very early yet; but when he looked at the watch on his table he saw both hands arrested at twelve o'clock.

"Ah! Yes," he mumbled to himself, and as if beginning to get roused a little he took a survey of his room. The paper stabbed to the wall arrested his attention. He eyed it from the distance without approval or perplexity; but when he heard the servant-girl beginning to bustle about in the outer room with the samovar for his morning tea, he walked up to it and took it down with an air of profound indifference.

While doing that he glanced down at the bed on which he had not slept that night. The hollow in the pillow made by the weight of Haldin's head was very noticeable.

Even his anger at this sign of the man's passage was dull. He did not try to nurse it into life. He did nothing all that day; he neglected even to brush his hair. The idea of going out never occurred to him—and if he did not start a connected train of thought, it was not because he was unable to think. It was because he was not interested enough.

He yawned frequently. He drank large quantities of tea, he walked about aimlessly and whenever he sat down he did not budge for a long time. He spent some time drumming on the window with his finger-tips quietly. In his listless wanderings round about the table he caught sight of his own face in the looking-glass and that arrested him. The eyes which returned his stare were the most unhappy eyes he had ever seen. And that was the first thing that disturbed the mental stagnation of that day.

He was not affected personally. He merely thought that life without happiness is impossible. What was happiness? He yawned and went on shuffling about and about between the walls of his room. Looking forward

was happiness—that’s all—nothing more. To look forward to the gratification of some desire, to the gratification of some passion, love, ambition, hate—hate too indubitably. Love and hate. And to escape the dangers of existence, to live without fear, was also happiness. There was nothing else. Absence of fear—looking forward. “ Oh! the miserable lot of humanity!” he exclaimed, mentally: and added at once in his thought, “ I ought to be happy enough as far as that goes.” But he was not excited by that assurance. On the contrary, he yawned again as he had been yawning all that day. He was mildly surprised to discover himself being overtaken by night. The room grew dark swiftly, though time had seemed to stand still. How was it that he had not noticed the passing of that day? Of course it was the watch being stopped. . . .

He did not light his lamp, but went over to the bed and threw himself on it without any hesitation. Lying on his back, he put his hands under his head and stared upward. After a moment he thought: “ I am lying here like that man. I wonder if he slept while I was struggling with the blizzard in the streets. No, he did not sleep. But why should I not sleep?” and he felt the silence of the night press upon all his limbs like a weight.

In the calm of the hard frost outside, the clear-cut strokes of the town clock counting off midnight penetrated the quietness of his suspended animation.

Again he began to think. It was twenty-four hours since that man left his room. Razumov had a distinct feeling that Haldin in the fortress was sleeping that night. It was a certitude which made him angry because he did not want to think of Haldin, but he justified it to himself by physiological and psychological reasons. The fellow had hardly slept for weeks on his own confession and now every incertitude was at an end for him. No doubt he was looking forward to the consummation of his martyrdom. A man who resigns himself to kill need not go very far for resignation to die. Haldin slept perhaps more soundly than General T——, whose task—weary work, too—was not done and over whose head hung the sword of revolutionary vengeance.

Razumov, remembering the thick-set man with his heavy jowl resting on the collar of his uniform, the champion of autocracy, who had let no sign of surprise, incredulity or joy escape him, but whose goggle eyes could express a mortal hatred of all rebellion—Razumov moved uneasily on the bed.

“ He suspected me,” he thought. “ I suppose he must suspect everybody. He would be capable of suspecting his own wife, if Haldin had gone to her boudoir with his confession.”

Razumov sat up in anguish. Was he to remain a political suspect all his days? Was he to go through life as a man not wholly to be trusted—with a bad secret police note tacked on to his record? What sort of future could he look forward to?

“ I am now a suspect,” he thought again; but the habit of reflection and that desire of safety, of an ordered life, which was so strong in him came to his assistance as the night wore on. His quiet, steady and laborious existence would vouch at length for his loyalty. There were many permitted ways to serve one’s country. There was an activity that made for progress without being revolutionary. The field of influence was great and infinitely varied—once one had conquered a name.

His thought, like a circling bird, reverted after four-and-twenty hours

to the silver medal, and, as it were, poised itself there. When the day broke he had not slept, not for a moment, but he got up not very tired and quite sufficiently self-possessed for all practical purposes.

He went out and attended three lectures in the morning. But the work in the library was a mere dumb show of research. He sat with many volumes open before him trying to make notes and extracts. His new tranquillity was like a flimsy garment and seemed to float at the mercy of a casual word. Betrayal! Why! the fellow had done all that was necessary to betray himself! Precious little had been needed to deceive him.

"I have said no word to him that was not strictly true. Not one word"—Razumov argued with himself.

Once engaged on this line of thought, there could be no question of doing useful work. The same ideas went on passing through his mind and he pronounced mentally the same words over and over again. He shut up all the books and rammed all his papers into his pocket with convulsive movements, raging inwardly against Haldin.

As he was leaving the library a long bony student in a threadbare overcoat joined him, stepping moodily by his side. Razumov answered his mumbled greeting without looking at him at all.

"What does he want with me?" he thought with a strange dread of the unexpected which he tried to shake off lest it should fasten itself upon his life for good and all. And the other, muttering cautiously with downcast eyes, supposed that his comrade had seen the news of de P——'s executioner—that was the expression he used—having been arrested the night before last. . . .

"I've been ill—shut up in my rooms," Razumov mumbled through his teeth.

The tall student, raising his shoulders, shoved his hands deep into his pockets. He had a hairless, square, tallowy chin which trembled slightly as he spoke, and his nose, nipped bright red by the sharp air, looked like a false nose of painted cardboard between the sallow cheeks. His whole appearance was stamped with the mark of cold and hunger. He stalked deliberately at Razumov's elbow with his eyes on the ground.

"It's an official statement," he continued in the same cautious mutter. "It may be a lie. But there was somebody arrested between midnight and one in the morning on Tuesday. That is certain."

And talking rapidly under the cover of his downcast air, he told Razumov that this was known through an inferior government clerk employed at the Central Secretariat. That man belonged to one of the revolutionary circles. "The same, in fact, I am affiliated to," remarked the student.

They were crossing a wide quadrangle. An infinite distress possessed Razumov, annihilated his energy, and before his eyes everything appeared confused and as if evanescent. He dared not leave the fellow there. "He may be affiliated to the police," was the thought that passed through his mind. "Who could tell?" But eyeing the miserable frost-nipped, famine-struck figure of his companion, he perceived the absurdity of his suspicion.

"But I—you know—I don't belong to any circle. I . . ."

He dared not say any more. Neither dared he mend his pace. The other, raising and setting down his lamentably shod feet with exact deliberation, protested in a low tone that it was not necessary, for everybody to belong to an organization. The most valuable personalities remained outside. Then very fast, with whispering, feverish lips:

“ The man arrested in the street was Haldin.”

And accepting Razumov’s dismayed silence as natural enough, he assured him that there was no mistake. That government clerk was on night duty at the Secretariat. Hearing a great noise of footsteps in the hall and aware that political prisoners were brought over sometimes at night from the fortress, he opened the door of the room in which he was working, suddenly. Before the gendarme on duty could push him back and slam the door in his face, he had seen a prisoner being partly carried, partly dragged along the hall by a lot of policemen. He was being used very brutally. And the clerk had recognized Haldin perfectly. Less than half an hour afterward General T—— arrived at the Secretariat to examine that prisoner personally.

“ Aren’t you astonished?” concluded the gaunt student.

“ No,” said Razumov, brutally—and at once regretted his answer.

“ Everybody supposed Haldin was in the provinces—with his people. Didn’t you?”

The student turned his big hollow eyes upon Razumov, who said, unguardedly:

“ His people are abroad.”

He could have bitten his tongue out with vexation. The student pronounced in a tone of profound meaning:

“ So! You alone were aware . . .” and stopped.

“ They have sworn my ruin,” thought Razumov.

“ Have you spoken of this to any one else?” he asked with bitter curiosity.

The other shook his head.

“ No, only to you. Our circle thought that as Haldin had been often heard expressing a warm appreciation of your character . . .”

Razumov could not restrain a gesture of angry despair, which the other must have misunderstood in some way, because he ceased speaking and turned away his black, lack-lustre eyes.

They moved side by side in silence. Then the gaunt student began to whisper again, with averted gaze.

“ As we have at present no one affiliated inside the fortress so as to make it possible to furnish him with a packet of poison, we have considered already some sort of retaliatory action—to follow very soon . . .”

Razumov, trudging on, interrupted:

“ Were you acquainted with Haldin? Did he know where you live?”

“ I had the happiness to hear him speak twice,” his companion answered in the feverish whisper contrasting with the gloomy apathy of his face and bearing. “ He did not know where I live. . . . I am lodging poorly . . . with an artisan family. . . . I have just a corner in a room. It is not very practicable to see me there, but if you should need me for anything I am ready . . .”

Razumov trembled with rage and fear. He was beside himself, but kept his voice low.

“ You are not to come near me. You are not to speak to me. Never address a single word to me. I forbid you.”

“ Very well,” said the other submissively, showing no surprise whatever at this abrupt prohibition. “ You don’t wish, for secret reasons . . . perfectly . . . I understand.”

He edged away at once, not looking up even; and Razumov saw his

gaunt, shabby, famine-stricken figure cross the street obliquely with lowered head and that peculiar exact motion of the feet.

He watched him as one would watch a vision out of a nightmare, then he continued on his way, trying not to think. On his landing, the landlady seemed to be waiting for him. She was a short, thick, shapeless woman with a large yellow face wrapped up everlastingly in a black woollen shawl. When she saw him come up the last flight of stairs she flung both her arms up excitedly, then clasped her hands before her face.

"Kirylo Sidorovitch—little father—what have you been doing! And such a quiet young man, too. The police are just gone this moment after searching your rooms."

Razumov gazed down at her with silent, scrutinizing attention. Her puffy yellow countenance was working with emotion. She screwed up her eyes at him entreatingly.

"Such a sensible young man. Anybody can see you are sensible. And now—like this—all at once. . . . What is the good of mixing yourself up with these Nihilists. Do give over—little father. They are unlucky people."

Razumov moved his shoulders slightly.

"Or is it that some secret enemy has been calumniating you, Kirylo Sidorovitch? The world is full of black hearts and false denunciations nowadays. There is much fear about."

"Have you heard that I have been denounced by some one?" asked Razumov, without taking his eyes off her quivering face.

But she had not heard anything. She had tried to find out by asking the police captain while his men were turning the room upside down. The police captain of the district had known her for the last eleven years and was a humane person. But he said to her on the landing, looking very black and vexed:

"My good woman, do you ask questions? I don't know anything myself. The order comes from higher quarters."

And indeed there had come, shortly after the arrival of the policemen of the district a very superior gentleman in a fur coat and a shiny hat, who sat down in the room and looked through all the papers himself. He came alone and went away by himself, taking nothing with him. She had been trying to put things straight a little since they left.

Razumov turned away brusquely and entered his rooms.

All his books had been shaken and thrown on the floor. His landlady followed him and, stooping painfully, began to pick them up into her apron. His papers and notes which were kept always neatly sorted (they all related to his studies) had been all shuffled up and heaped together into a ragged pile in the middle of the table.

This disorder affected him profoundly, unreasonably. He sat down and stared. He had a distinct sensation of his very existence being undermined in some mysterious manner, of his moral supports falling away from him one by one. He even experienced a slight physical giddiness and made a movement as if to reach for something to steady himself with.

The old woman, rising to her feet with a low groan, shot all the books she had collected in her apron on to the sofa, and left the room muttering.

It was only then that he noticed that the sheet of paper which for one night had remained stabbed to the wall above his empty bed was lying on top of the pile.

When he had taken it down the day before he had folded it in four, absent-mindedly before dropping it on the table. And now he saw it lying uppermost, spread out, smoothed out even and covering all the confused pile of pages, the record of his intellectual life for the last three years. It had not been flung there. It had been placed there—smoothed out, too! He guessed in that an intention—a profound meaning—or perhaps some inexplicable mockery.

He sat staring at the piece of paper till his eyes began to smart. He did not attempt to put his papers in order, either that evening or the next day—which he spent at home in a state of peculiar irresolution. This irresolution bore upon the question whether he should continue to live—neither more nor less. But its nature was very far removed from the hesitation of a man contemplating suicide. The idea of laying violent hands upon his body did not occur to Razumov. The unrelated organism bearing that label walking, breathing, wearing these clothes, was of no importance to any one, unless maybe to the landlady. The true Razumov had his being in the willed, in the determined future—in that future menaced by the lawlessness of autocracy—for autocracy knows no law—and the lawlessness of revolution. The feeling that his moral personality was at the mercy of these lawless forces was so strong that he asked himself seriously if it were worth while to go on accomplishing the mental functions of that existence which seemed no longer his own.

“What is the good of exerting my intelligence, of pursuing the systematic development of my faculties and all my plans of work?” he asked himself. “I want to guide my conduct by reasonable convictions, but what security have I against something—some destructive horror—walking in upon me as I sit here? . . .”

Razumov looked apprehensively towards the door of the outer room as if expecting some shape of evil to turn the handle and appear before him silently.

“A common thief,” he said to himself, “finds more guarantees in the law he is breaking, and even a brute like Ziemianitch has his consolation.” Razumov envied the materialism of the thief and the passion of the incorrigible old man. The consequences of their actions were always clear and their lives remained their own.

But he slept as soundly that night as though he had been consoling himself in the manner of Ziemianitch. He dropped off suddenly, lay like a log, remembered no dream on waking. But it was as if his soul had gone out in the night to gather the flowers of wrathful wisdom. He got up in a mood of grim determination and as if with a new knowledge of his own nature. He looked mockingly on the heap of papers on his table; and left his room to attend the lectures muttering to himself: “We shall see.”

He was in no humor to talk to anybody or hear himself questioned as to his absence from lectures the day before. But it was difficult to repulse rudely a very good comrade with a smooth pink face and fair hair, bearing the nickname amongst his fellow students of “Madcap Kostia.” He was the idolized only son of a very wealthy and illiterate Government contractor, and attended the lectures only during the periodical fits of contrition following upon tearful paternal remonstrances. Noisily blundering like a retriever puppy, his elated voice and great gestures filled the bare academy corridors with the joy of thoughtless animal life; provoking indulgent smiles at a great distance. His usual discourses treated of

trotting-horses, wine parties in expensive restaurants and the merits of persons of easy virtue, with a disarming artlessness of outlook. He pounced upon Razumov about midday somewhat less unroariously than his habit was, and led him aside.

"Just a moment, Kirylo Sidorovitch. A few words here in this quiet corner."

He felt Razumov's reluctance and insinuated his hand under his arm caressingly.

"No—pray do. I don't want to talk to you about any of my silly scrapes. What are my scrapes? Absolutely nothing. Mere childishness. The other night I flung a fellow out of a certain place where I was having a fairly good time. A tyrannical little beast of a quill-driver from the Treasury Department. . . . He was bullying the people of the house. I rebuked him. 'You are not behaving humanely to God's creatures that are a jolly sight more estimable than yourself,' I said. I can't bear to see any tyranny, Kirylo Sidorovitch. Upon my word I can't. He didn't take it in good part at all. 'Who's that impudent puppy?' he begins to shout. I was in excellent form as it happened, and he went through the closed window very suddenly. He flew quite a long way into the yard. I raged like—like a—minotaur. The women clung to me and screamed, the fiddlers got under the table. . . . Such fun! My dad had to put his hand pretty deep into his pocket, I can tell you."

He chuckled.

"My dad is a very useful man. Jolly good thing it is for me, too. I do get into unholy scrapes."

His elation fell. That was just it. What was his life? Insignificant; no good to any one; a mere festivity. It would end some fine day in his getting his skull split with a champagne-bottle in a drunken brawl. At such times too when men were sacrificing themselves to ideas. But he could never get any ideas into his head. His head wasn't worth anything better than to be split by a champagne-bottle.

Razumov, protesting that he had no time, made an attempt to get away. The other's tone changed to confidential earnestness.

"For God's sake, Kirylo, my dear soul, let me make some sort of sacrifice. It would not be a sacrifice really. I have my rich dad behind me. There's positively no getting to the bottom of his pocket."

And rejecting indignantly Razumov's suggestion that this was drunken raving, he offered to lend him some money to escape abroad with. He could always get money from his dad. He had only to say that he had lost it at cards or something of that sort, and at the same time promise solemnly not to miss a single lecture for three months on end. That would fetch the old man; and he, Kostia, was quite equal to the sacrifice. Though he really did not see what was the good for him to attend the lectures. It was perfectly hopeless.

"Won't you let me be of some use?" he pleaded to the silent Razumov, who with his eyes on the ground and utterly unable to penetrate the real drift of the other's intention, felt a strange reluctance to clear up the point.

"What makes you think I want to go abroad?" he asked at last very quietly.

Kostia lowered his voice.

"You had the police in your rooms yesterday. There are three or four

of us who have heard of that. Never mind how we know. It is sufficient that we do. So we have been consulting together.”

“ Ah! You got to know that so soon,” muttered Razumov, negligently.

“ Yes. We did. And it struck us that a man like you . . . ”

“ What sort of man do you take me to be?” Razumov interrupted him.

“ A man of ideas—and a man of action, too. But you are very deep, Kirylo. There’s no getting to the bottom of your mind. Not for fellows like me. But we all agreed that you must be preserved for our country. Of that we have no doubt whatever—I mean all of us who have heard Haldin speak of you on certain occasions. A man doesn’t get the police ransacking his rooms without there being some devilry hanging over his head. . . . And so if you think that it would be better for you to bolt at once. . . . ”

Razumov tore himself away and walked down the corridor, leaving the other motionless with his mouth open. But almost at once he returned and stood before the amazed Kostia, who shut his mouth slowly. Razumov looked him straight in the eyes, before saying with marked deliberation and separating his words:

“ I thank—you—very—much.”

He went away again rapidly. Kostia recovering from his surprise at these manœuvres ran up behind him pressingly.

“ No! Wait! Listen. I really mean it. It would be like giving your compassion to a starving fellow. Do you hear, Kirylo? And any disguise you may think of, that, too, I could procure from a *costumier*, a Jew I know. Let a fool be made serviceable according to his folly. Perhaps also a false beard or something of that kind may be needed.”

Razumov turned at bay.

“ There are no false beards needed in this business, Kostia—you good-hearted lunatic, you. What do you know of my ideas? My ideas may be poison to you.”

The other began to shake his head in energetic protest.

“ What have you got to do with ideas? Some of them would make an end of your dad’s money-bags. Leave off meddling with what you don’t understand. Go back to your trotting-horses and your girls, and then you’ll be sure at least of doing no harm to anybody, and hardly any to yourself.”

The enthusiastic youth was overcome by this disdain.

“ You’re sending me back to my pig’s trough, Kirylo. That settles it. I am an unlucky beast—and I shall die like a beast, too. But mind—it’s your contempt that has done for me.”

Razumov went off with long strides. That this simple and grossly festive soul should have fallen too under the revolutionary curse affected him as an ominous symptom of the time. He reproached himself for feeling troubled. Personally he ought to have felt reassured. There was an obvious advantage in this conspiracy of mistaken judgment taking him for what he was not. But was it not strange!

Again he experienced that sensation of his conduct being taken out of his hands by Haldin’s revolutionary tyranny. His solitary and laborious existence had been destroyed—the only thing he could call his own on this earth. By what right? he asked himself furiously. In what name?

What infuriated him most was to feel that the “thinkers” of the University were evidently connecting him with Haldin—as a sort of confidant in the background, apparently. A mysterious connection! Ha, ha! . . . He

had been made a personage of without knowing anything about it. How that wretch Haldin must have talked about him! Yet it was likely that Haldin had said very little. The fellow's casual utterances were caught up and treasured and pondered over by all these imbeciles. And was not all secret revolutionary action based upon folly, self-deception and lies?

"Impossible to think of anything else," muttered Razumov to himself. "I'll become an idiot if this goes on. The scoundrels and the fools are murdering my intelligence."

He lost all hope of saving his future which depended on the free use of his intelligence.

He reached the doorway of his house in a state of mental discouragement which enabled him to receive with apparent indifference an official-looking envelope from the dirty hand of the dvornik.

"A gendarme brought it," said the man. "He asked if you were at home. I told him, 'No, he's not at home.' So he left it. 'Give it into his own hands,' says he. Now you've got it—eh?"

He went back to his sweeping and Razumov climbed his stairs, envelope in hand. Once in his room he did not hasten to open it. Of course, this official missive was from the superior direction of the police. A suspect! A suspect!

He stared in dreary astonishment at the absurdity of his position. He thought, with a sort of dry, unemotional melancholy: three years of good work gone, the course of forty more perhaps jeopardized—turned from hope to terror, because events started by human folly link themselves into a sequence which no sagacity can foresee and no courage can break through. Fatality enters your rooms while your landlady's back is turned; you come home and find it in possession bearing a man's name, clothed in flesh—wearing a brown cloth coat and long boots—lounging against the stove. It asks you "Is the outer door closed?"—and you don't know enough to take it by the throat and fling it down-stairs. You don't know. You welcome the crazy fate. "Sit down," you say. And it is all over. You cannot shake it off any more. It will cling to you forever. Neither halter nor bullet can give you back the freedom of your life and the sanity of your thought. . . . It was enough to dash one's head against a wall.

Razumov looked slowly all round the walls as if to select a spot to dash his head against. Then he opened the letter. It directed the student Kirylo Sidorovitch Razumov to present himself without delay at the General Secretariat.

Razumov had a vision of General T——'s goggle eyes waiting for him—the embodied power of autocracy, grotesque and terrible. He embodied the whole power of autocracy because he was its guardian. He was the incarnate suspicion, the incarnate anger, the incarnate ruthlessness of a political and social régime on its defence. He loathed rebellion by instinct. And Razimov reflected that the man was simply unable to understand a reasonable adherence to the doctrine of absolutism.

"What can he want with me precisely—I wonder?" he asked himself.

As if that mental question had evoked the familiar phantom, Haldin stood suddenly before him in the room, with an extraordinary completeness of detail. Though the short winter day had passed already into the sinister twilight of a land buried in snow, Razumov saw plainly the narrow leather strap round the Tcherkess coat. The illusion of that hateful presence was so perfect that he half expected it to ask—"Is the outer

door closed?” He looked at it with hatred and contempt. Souls do not take a shape of clothing. Moreover Haldin could not be dead yet. Razumov stepped forward menacingly; the vision vanished—and turning short on his heel he walked out of his room with infinite disdain.

But after going down calmly the first flight of stairs it occurred to him that perhaps the superior authorities of police meant to confront him with Haldin in the flesh. This thought struck him like a bullet—and had he not clung with both hands to the banister he would have rolled down to the next landing most likely. His legs were of no use for a considerable time. . . . But why? For what conceivable reason? To what end?

There could be no rational answer to these questions; but Razumov remembered the promise made by the General to Prince K—. His action was to remain unknown.

He got down to the bottom of the stairs, lowering himself as it were from step to step, by the banister. Under the gate he regained much of his firmness of thought and limb. He went out into the street without staggering visibly. Every moment he felt steadier mentally. And yet he was saying to himself that General T— was perfectly capable of shutting him up in the fortress for an indefinite time. His temperament fitted his remorseless task and his omnipotence made him inaccessible to reasonable argument.

But when Razumov arrived at the Secretariat he discovered that he would have nothing to do with General T—. It is evident from Mr. Razumov's diary that this dreaded personality was to remain in the background. A civilian of superior rank received him in a private room after a period of waiting in outer offices where a lot of scribbling went on at many tables in a heated and stuffy atmosphere.

The clerk in uniform who conducted him said in the corridor:

“ You are going before Gregory Matvieitch Mikulin.”

There was nothing formidable about the man bearing that name. His mild expectant glance was turned on the door already when Razumov entered. At once, with the penholder he was holding in his hand, he pointed to a deep sofa between two windows. He followed Razumov with his eyes while that last crossed the room and sat down. The mild gaze rested on him, not curious, not inquisitive,—certainly not suspicious—almost without expression. In its passionless persistence there was something resembling sympathy.

Razumov, who had prepared his will and his intelligence to encounter General T— himself, was profoundly troubled. All the moral bracing up against the possible excesses of power and passion went for nothing before this fallow man who wore a full unclipped beard. It was fair, thin, and very fine. The light fell in coppery gleams on the protuberances of a high forehead. And the aspect of the flat, soft physiognomy was so homely and rustie that the careful middle parting of the hair seemed a pretentious affectation.

The diary of Mr. Razumov testifies to some irritation on his part. I may remark here that the diary proper consisting of the more or less daily entries seems to have been begun on that very evening after Mr. Razumov had returned home.

Mr. Razumov, then, was irritated. His strung-up individuality had gone to pieces within him very suddenly.

“ I must be very prudent with him,” he warned himself in the silence

during which they sat gazing at each other. It lasted some little time and was characterized (for silences have their character) by a sort of sadness imparted to it perhaps by the mild and thoughtful manner of the bearded official. Razumov learned later that he was the chief of a department in the third section of the Secretariat, with a rank in the civil service equivalent to that of a colonel in the army.

Razumov's mistrust became acute. The main point was, not to be drawn into saying too much. He had been called there for some reason. What reason? To be given to understand that he was a suspect—and also no doubt to be pumped. As to what, precisely? There was nothing. Or perhaps Haldin had been telling lies. . . Every alarming uncertainty beset Razumov. He could bear the silence no longer, and cursing himself for his weakness, spoke first, though he had promised himself not to do so on any account.

"I haven't lost a moment's time," he began in a hoarse, provoking tone; and then the faculty of speech seemed to leave him and enter the body of Councillor Mikulin, who chimed in approvingly:

"Very proper. Very proper. Though as a matter of fact . . ."

But the spell was broken and Razumov interrupted him boldly under a sudden conviction that this was the safest attitude to take. With a great flow of words he complained of being totally misunderstood. Even as he talked with a perception of his own audacity he thought that the word "misunderstood" was better than the word "mistrusted," and he repeated it again with insistence. Suddenly he ceased, being seized with fright before the attentive immobility of the official. "What am I talking about?" he thought, eyeing him with a vague gaze. Mistrusted—not misunderstood, was the right symbol for these people. Misunderstood was the other kind of curse. Both had been brought on his head by that fellow Haldin. And his head ached terribly. He passed his hand over his brow—an involuntary gesture of suffering, which he was too careless to restrain. At that moment Razumov beheld his own brain suffering on the rack—a long, pale figure drawn asunder horizontally with terrific force in the darkness of a vault and whose face he failed to see. It was as though he had dreamed for an infinitesimal fraction of time of some dark print of the Inquisition. . . .

It is not to be seriously supposed that Razumov had actually dozed off and had dreamed in the presence of Councillor Mikulin, of an old print of the Inquisition. He was, indeed, extremely exhausted, and he records a remarkably dream-like impression of anguish at the circumstance that there was no one whatever near the pale and extended figure. The solitude of the racked victim was particularly horrible to behold. The mysterious impossibility to see the face, he also notes, inspired a sort of terror. All these characteristics of an ugly dream were present. Yet he is certain that he never lost the consciousness of himself on the sofa, leaning forward with his hands between his knees and turning his cap round and round in his fingers. But everything vanished at the voice of Councillor Mikulin. Razumov felt profoundly grateful for the even simplicity of its tone.

"Yes. I have listened with interest. I comprehend in a measure your . . . But indeed you are mistaken in what you . . ." Councillor Mikulin uttered a series of broken sentences. Instead of finishing them he glanced down his beard. It was a deliberate curtailment which somehow made the phrases more impressive. But he could talk fluently enough,

as became apparent when, changing his tone to persuasiveness, he went on: “By listening to you as I did, I think I have proved that I do not regard our intercourse as strictly official. In fact, I don’t want it to have that character at all. . . . Oh yes! I admit that the request for your presence here had an official form. But I put it to you whether it was a form which would have been used to secure the attendance of a . . .”

“Suspect,” exclaimed Razumov, looking straight into the official’s eyes. They were big, with heavy eyelids and met his boldness with a dim, steadfast gaze. “A suspect.” The open repetition of that word which had been haunting all his waking hours gave Razumov a strange sort of satisfaction. Councillor Mikulin shook his head slightly. “Surely you do know that I’ve had my rooms searched by the police?”

“I was about to say a misunderstood person when you interrupted me,” insinuated, quietly, Councillor Mikulin.

Razumov smiled without bitterness. The renewed sense of his intellectual superiority sustained him in the hour of danger. He said, a little disdainfully:

“I know I am but a reed. But I beg you to allow me the superiority of the thinking reed over the unthinking forces that are about to crush him out of existence. Practical thinking in the last instance is but criticism. I may, perhaps, be allowed to express my wonder at this action of the police being delayed for two full days, during which, of course, I could have annihilated everything compromising by burning it—for instance—and getting rid of the very ashes, for that matter.”

“You are angry,” remarked the official, with an unutterable simplicity of tone and manner. “Is that reasonable?”

Razumov felt himself coloring with annoyance.

“I am reasonable. I am even—permit me to say—a thinker, though, to be sure, this name nowadays seems to be the monopoly of hawkers of revolutionary wares, the slaves of some French or German thought—devil knows what foreign notions. But I am not an intellectual mongrel. I think like a Russian. I think faithfully—and I take the liberty to call myself a thinker. It is not a forbidden word, as far as I know.”

“No. Why should it be a forbidden word?” Councillor Mikulin turned in his seat with crossed legs and, resting his elbow on the table, propped his head on the knuckles of a half-closed hand. Razumov noticed a thick forefinger clasped by a massive gold band set with a blood-red stone—a signet ring that, looking as if it could weigh half a pound, was an appropriate ornament for that ponderous man with the accurate middle parting of glossy hair above a rugged Socratic forehead.

“Could it be a wig?” Razumov detected himself wondering with an unexpected detachment. His self-confidence was much shaken. He resolved to chatter no more. Reserve! Reserve! All he had to do was to keep the Ziemianitch episode secret with absolute determination when the questions came. Keep Ziemianitch strictly out of all the answers.

Councillor Mikulin looked at him dimly. Razumov’s self-confidence abandoned him completely. It seemed impossible to keep Ziemianitch out. Every question would lead to that, because of course there was nothing else. He made an effort to brace himself up. It was a failure. But Councillor Mikulin was surprisingly detached, too.

“Why should it be forbidden,” he repeated. “I too consider myself a thinking man, I assure you. The principal condition is to think correctly.

I admit it is difficult sometimes at first for a young man abandoned to himself—with his generous impulses undisciplined, so to speak—at the mercy of every wild wind that blows. Religious belief, of course, is a great . . .”

Councillor Mikulin glanced down at his beard, and Razumov, whose tension was relaxed by that unexpected and discursive turn, murmured, with gloomy discontent,

“That man Haldin believed in God.”

“Ah! You are aware,” breathed out Councillor Mikulin, making the point softly, as if with discretion, but making it nevertheless plainly enough, as if he too were put off his guard by Razumov’s remark. That last preserved an impassive moody countenance, though he reproached himself bitterly for a pernicious fool to have given thus an utterly false impression of intimacy. He kept his eyes on the floor. “I must positively hold my tongue unless I am obliged to speak,” he admonished himself. And at once against his will the question, “Hadn’t I better tell him everything?” presented itself with such force that he had to bite his lower lip. Councillor Mikulin could not, however, have nourished any hope of confession. He went on.

“You tell me more than his judges were able to get out of him. He was judged by a commission of three. He would tell them absolutely nothing. I have the report of the interrogators here by me. After every question there stands, ‘Refuses to answer—refuses to answer.’ It’s like that page after page. You see, I have been intrusted with some further investigations around and about this affair. He has left me nothing to begin my investigations on. A hardened miscreant. And so you say he believed in . . .”

Again Councillor Mikulin glanced at his beard with a faint grimace, but he did not pause for long. Remarking, with a shade of scorn, that blasphemers also had that sort of belief, he concluded by supposing that Mr. Razumov had conversed frequently with Haldin on the subject.

“No,” said Razumov, loudly, without looking up. “He talked and I listened. That is not a conversation.”

“Listening is a great art,” observed Mikulin, parenthetically.

“And getting people to talk is another,” mumbled Razumov.

“Well, no—that is not very difficult,” Mikulin said, innocently, “except of course in special cases. For instance, this Haldin. Nothing could induce him to talk. He was brought four times before the delegated judges. Four secret interrogatories—and even during the last when your personality was put forward . . .”

“My personality put forward,” repeated Razumov, raising his head brusquely. “I don’t understand.”

Councillor Mikulin turned squarely to the table, and taking up some sheets of gray foolscap dropped them one after another, retaining only the last in his hand. He held it before his eyes while speaking.

“It was—you see—judged necessary. In a case of that gravity, no means of action upon the culprit should be neglected. You understand that yourself, I am certain.”

Razumov stared with enormous wide eyes at the side view of Councillor Mikulin, who now was not looking at him at all.

“So it was decided (I was consulted by General T——) that a certain question should be put to the accused. But in deference to the earnest

wishes of Prince K—— your name has been kept out of the documents and even from the very knowledge of the judges themselves. Prince K—— recognized the propriety, the necessity of what we proposed to do, but he was concerned for your safety. Things do leak out—that we can't deny. One cannot always answer for the discretion of inferior officials. There was, of course, the secretary of the special tribunal—one or two gendarmes in the room. Moreover, as I have said, in deference to Prince K—— even the judges themselves were to be left in ignorance. The question ready framed was sent to them by General T—— (I wrote it out with my own hand) with instructions to put it to the prisoner the very last of all. Here it is.”

Councillor Mikulin threw back his head into proper focus and went on reading, monotonously: “ Question: Has the man well known to you, in whose rooms you remained for several hours on Monday and on whose information you have been arrested—has he had any previous knowledge of your intention to commit a political murder? . . . Prisoner refuses to reply.”

“ Question repeated. Prisoner preserves the same stubborn silence.”

“ The venerable Chaplain of the Fortress being then admitted and exhorting the prisoner to repentance, entreating him also to atone for his crime by an unreserved and full confession which should help to liberate from the sin of rebellion against the Divine laws and the sacred Majesty of the Ruler, our Christ-loving land—the prisoner opens his lips for the first time during this morning's audience and in a loud, clear voice rejects the venerable Chaplain's ministrations.”

“ At eleven o'clock the court pronounces in summary form the death sentence.”

“ The execution is fixed for four o'clock in the afternoon, subject to further instructions from superior authorities.”

Councillor Mikulin dropped the page of foolscap, glanced down his beard, and, turning to Razumov, added in an easy, explanatory tone:

“ We saw no object in delaying the execution. The order to carry out the sentence was sent by telegraph at noon. I wrote out the telegram myself. He was hanged at four o'clock this afternoon.”

The definite information of Haldin's death gave Razumov that feeling of general lassitude which follows a great exertion or a great excitement. He kept very still on the sofa, but a murmur escaped him.

“ He had a belief in a future existence.”

Councillor Mikulin shrugged his shoulders slightly and Razumov got up with an effort. There was nothing now to stay for in that room. Haldin had been hanged at four o'clock. There could be no doubt of that. He had, it seemed, entered upon his future existence, long boots, astrachan fur cap and all, down to the very leather strap round his waist. A flickering, vanishing sort of existence. It was not his soul, it was his mere phantom that he left behind on this earth—thought Razumov, smiling caustically to himself while he crossed the room, utterly forgetful of where he was and of Councillor Mikulin's existence. This last could have set a lot of bells ringing all over the building without leaving his chair. He let Razumov come up quite to the door before he spoke.

“ Come, Kirylo Sidorovitch. What are you doing?”

Razumov turned his head and looked at him in silence. He was not in the least disconcerted. Councillor Mikulin's arms were stretched out

on the table before him and his body leaned forward a little with an effort of his dim gaze.

"Was I actually going to clear out like this?" Razumov wondered at himself, with an impassive countenance. And he was aware of this impassiveness concealing a lucid astonishment.

"Evidently I was going out if he had not spoken," he thought. "What would he have done then? I must end this affair one way or another. I must make him show his hand."

For a moment longer he reflected behind the mask as it were, then let go the door handle and came back to the middle of the room.

"I'll tell you what you think," he said, explosively, but not raising his voice. "You think that you are dealing with a secret accomplice of that unhappy man. No, I do not know that he was unhappy. He did not tell me. He was a wretch from my point of view, because to keep alive a false idea is a greater crime than to kill a man. I suppose you will not deny that? I hated him! Visionaries work everlasting evil on earth. Their Utopias inspire in the mass of mediocre minds a disgust of reality and a contempt for the secular logic of human development."

Razumov shrugged his shoulders and stared. "What a tirade," he thought. The silence and immobility of Councillor Mikulin impressed him. The bearded bureaucrat sat at his post, mysteriously self-possessed like an idol with dim unreadable eyes. Razumov's voice changed involuntarily.

"If you were to ask me where is the necessity of my hate for such as Haldin I would answer you—there is nothing sentimental in it. I did not hate him because he had committed the crime of murder. Abhorrence is not hate. I hated him simply because I am sane. It is in that character that he outraged me. His death . . ."

Razumov felt his voice growing thick in his throat. The dimness of Councillor Mikulin's eyes seemed to spread all over his face and made it indistinct to Razumov's sight. He tried to disregard these phenomena.

"Indeed," he pursued, pronouncing each word carefully, "what is his death to me? If he were lying here on the floor I could walk over his breast. . . . The fellow is a mere phantom. . . ."

Razumov's voice died out very much against his will. Mikulin behind the table did not allow himself the slightest movement. The silence lasted for some little time before Razumov could go on again.

"He went about talking of me. . . . Those intellectual fellows sit in each other's rooms and get drunk on foreign ideas in the same way young Guard's officers treat each other with foreign wines. Merest debauchery. . . . Upon my word"—Razumov, enraged by a sudden recollection of Ziemianitch, lowered his voice forcibly—"upon my word, we Russians are a drunken lot. Intoxication of some sort we must have: to get ourselves wild with sorrow or maudlin with resignation; to lie inert like a log or set fire to the house. What is a sober man to do, I should like to know? To cut oneself entirely from one's kind is impossible. To live in a desert, one must be a saint. But if a drunken man runs out of the grog-shop, falls on your neck and kisses you on both cheeks because something about your appearance has taken his fancy, what then—kindly tell me? You may break, perhaps, a cudgel on his back, and yet not succeed in beating him off. . . ."

Councillor Mikulin raised his hand and passed it down his face deliberately.

“ That’s . . . of course,” he said in an undertone.

The quiet gravity of that gesture made Razumov pause. It was so unexpected, too. What did it mean? It had an alarming aloofness. Razumov remembered his intention of making him show his hand.

“ I have said all this to Prince K——,” he began, with assumed indifference, but lost it on seeing Councillor Mikulin’s slow nod of assent. “ You know it? You’ve heard. . . . Then why should I be called here to be told of Haldin’s execution? Did you want to confront me with his silence, now that the man is dead? What is his silence to me? This is incomprehensible. You want in some way to shake my moral balance.”

“ No. Not that,” murmured Councillor Mikulin, just audibly. “ The service you have rendered is appreciated. . . .”

“ Is it?” interrupted Razumov, ironically.

“ . . . And your position, too.” Councillor Mikulin did not raise his voice. “ But only think! You fall into Prince K——’s study as if from the sky with your startling information. . . . You are studying yet, Mr. Razumov, but we are serving already, don’t forget that. . . . And naturally some curiosity was bound to . . .”

Councillor Mikulin looked down his beard. Razumov’s lips trembled.

“ An occurrence of that sort marks a man,” the homely murmur went on. “ I admit I was curious to see you. General T—— thought it would be useful to . . . Don’t think I am incapable of understanding your sentiments. When I was young like you I studied. . . .”

“ Yes—you wished to see me,” said Razumov in a tone of profound distaste. “ Naturally, you have the right—I mean, the power. It all amounts to the same thing. But it is perfectly useless if you were to look at me and listen to me for a year. I begin to think there is something about me which people don’t seem able to make out. It’s unfortunate. I imagine, however, that Prince K—— understands. He seemed to.”

Councillor Mikulin moved slightly and spoke.

“ Prince K—— is aware of everything that is being done, and I don’t mind informing you that he approved my intention of becoming personally acquainted with you.”

Razumov concealed an immense disappointment under the accents of railing surprise.

“ So he is curious, too! . . . Well—after all, Prince K—— knows me very little. It is really very unfortunate for me, but—it is not exactly my fault.”

Councillor Mikulin raised a hasty deprecatory hand and inclined his head slightly over his shoulder.

“ Now, Mr. Razumov—is it necessary to take it in that way? Everybody, I am sure, can . . .”

He glanced rapidly down at his beard, and when he looked up again there was for a moment an interested expression in his misty gaze. Razumov discouraged it with a cold, repellent smile.

“ No. That’s of no importance, to be sure—except that in respect of all this curiosity being aroused by a very simple matter . . . What is to be done with it? It is unappeasable. I mean to say, there is nothing to appease it with. I happen to have been born a Russian with patriotic instincts—whether inherited or not, I am not in a position to say.”

Razumov spoke consciously with elaborate steadiness.

“ Yes, patriotic instincts developed in a conservative direction by a

faculty of independent thinking—of detached thinking. In that respect, I am more free than any social democratic revolution could make me. It is more than probable that I don't think exactly as you are thinking. Indeed, how could it be? You would think most likely at this moment that I am elaborately lying to cover up the track of my repentance."

Razumov stopped. His heart had grown too big for his breast. Councillor Mikulin did not flinch.

"Why so?" he said, simply. "I assisted personally at the search of your rooms. I looked through all the papers myself. I have been greatly impressed by a sort of political confession of faith. A very remarkable document. Now, may I ask for what purpose? . . ."

"To deceive the police, naturally," said Razumov, savagely. . . . "What is all this mockery? Of course you can send me straight from this room to Siberia. That would be intelligible. To what is intelligible I can submit. But I protest against this comedy of persecution. The whole affair is becoming too comical altogether for my taste. A comedy of errors, phantoms and suspicions. It's positively indecent. . . ."

Councillor Mikulin turned an attentive ear.

"Did you say phantoms?" he murmured.

"I could walk over dozens of them." Razumov, with an impatient wave of his hand, went on headlong: "But really, I must claim the right to be done once for all with that man. And in order to accomplish this, I shall take the liberty . . ."

Razumov, on his side of the table, bowed slightly to the seated bureaucrat.

". . . To retire—simply to retire," he finished, with great resolution.

He walked to the door thinking: "Now he must show his hand. He must ring and have me arrested before I am out of the building or he must let me go. And either way . . ."

An hurried voice said,

"Kirylo Sidorovitch."

Razumov at the door turned his head.

"To retire," he repeated.

"Where to?" asked Councillor Mikulin, softly.

(To be Continued)